CLAIMS:

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1. An electronic message processing system for sending and receiving electronic messages across a network, the electronic message processing system including:

a classification module, arranged to cause said received electronic messages to be analyzed in order to determine how said received electronic messages are routed within the electronic processing system, and to assign to said received electronic messages respective routing information;

a distribution module, arranged to distribute said received electronic messages amongst a plurality of first agents depending on the respective routing information associated with each message;

at least one mail client, arranged to render to one or more of said first agents electronic messages distributed thereto, the or each mail client including:

means, responsive to an input from one of said first agents in respect of a first rendered message, for causing a second electronic message to be generated, which second electronic message includes at least part of said first electronic message;

means for generating a routing tag, which routing tag includes data for determining how said second electronic message is routed by said electronic processing system;

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wherein the mail client is arranged to cause said routing tag to be included in said second electronic message and to cause said second electronic message to be sent out of said electronic processing system,

the classification module being arranged to, upon return of said second electronic message, or a derivative thereof, to said electronic processing system, to detect said routing tag in said returned electronic message and, upon detection of said routing tag, to cause said returned second electronic message, or derivative thereof, to be processed based on said data included in said routing tag.

2. An electronic message processing system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said data included in said routing tag includes means for identifying said first electronic message.

3. An electronic message processing system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said data included in said routing tag includes means for identifying an agent, or group of agents, associated with said electronic processing system.

4. An electronic message processing system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said data included in said routing tag includes means for identifying a class into which said first electronic message is deemed to belong.

5. An electronic message processing system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said routing tag comprises an opening tag element and a closing tag element for delimiting respectively the beginning and the end of the routing tag.

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6. An electronic message processing system as claimed in Claim 5, wherein the routing tag includes one or more sub-tags, each sub-tag including respective data concerning the first or second electronic message.

7. An electronic message processing system as claimed in Claim 5, wherein said routing tag is constructed according to an XML (eXtensible Mark-up Language) format.

8. An electronic message processing system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the mail client is arranged to cause the second electronic message to be sent to a second agent across said network, said second agent operating externally of said electronic message processing system.

9. An electronic message processing system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the mail client is arranged to cause the second electronic message to return to the electronic message processing system.

10. An electronic message processing system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said at least part of said first electronic message included in said second electronic message is associated with an identification tag.

11. An electronic message processing system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said second electronic message further includes a response, created by said first agent, to at least part of said first electronic message.

12. An electronic message processing system as claimed in Claim 11, wherein said response is associated with an identification tag.

13. An electronic message processing system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the routing tag is included in the subject line of said second electronic message.

14. An electronic message processing system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said routing tag comprises an alphanumeric string and said classification module is associated with an alphanumeric string parser.

15. An electronic message processing system as claimed in Claim 2, wherein said mail client, in response to the creation of said second electronic message, is arranged to cause said first electronic message to be suspended and, in response to detection of said routing tag in said returned second electronic message, said classification module is arranged to cause said first electronic message to be unsuspended.

16. An electronic message processing system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said mail client, in response to the creation of said second electronic message, is arranged to terminate the processing of said first electronic message.

17. A mail client for use in an electronic message processing system arranged to send and receive electronic messages across a network, in which system received electronic messages are distributed amongst a plurality of first agents, the mail client being arranged to render a first electronic message to a first agent, the mail client including:

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means, responsive to an input from said first agent, for causing a second electronic message to be generated, which second electronic message includes at least part of said first electronic message;

means for generating a routing tag, which routing tag includes data for determining how said second electronic message is processed by said electronic processing system;

wherein the mail client is arranged to cause said routing tag to be included in said second electronic message and to cause said second electronic message to be sent out of said electronic processing system,

whereupon return of said second electronic message, or a derivative thereof, to said electronic processing system, said data in said routing tag determines how said electronic processing system processes said returned second electronic message, or derivative thereof.

18. A mail client as claimed in claim 17, wherein said data included in said routing tag includes means for identifying said first electronic message.

19. A mail client as claimed in Claim 17, wherein said data included in said routing tag includes means for identifying an agent, or group of agents, associated with said electronic processing system.

20. A mail client as claimed in Claim 17, wherein said data included in said routing tag includes means for identifying a class into which said first electronic message falls.

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21. A mail client as claimed in Claim 17, wherein said routing tag comprises an opening tag element and a closing tag element for delimiting respectively the beginning and the end of the routing tag.

22. A mail client as claimed in Claim 17, wherein the routing tag includes one or more sub-tags, each sub-tag including respective data concerning the first or second electronic message.

23. A mail client as claimed in Claim 21, wherein said routing tag is constructed according to an XML (eXtensible Mark-up Language) format.

24. A mail client as claimed in Claim 17, wherein the mail client is arranged to cause the second electronic message to be sent to a second agent across said network, said second agent operating externally of said electronic message processing system.

25. A mail client as claimed in Claim 17, wherein the mail client is arranged to cause the second electronic message to return to the electronic message processing system.

26. A mail client as claimed in Claim 17, wherein said at least part of said first electronic message included in said second electronic message is associated with an identification tag.

27. A mail client as claimed in Claim 17, wherein said second electronic message further includes a response,

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created by said first agent, to at least part of said first electronic message.

28. A mail client as claimed in Claim 17, wherein said response is associated with an identification tag.

29. A mail client as claimed in Claim 17, wherein the routing tag is included in the subject line of said second electronic message.

30. In an electronic message processing system for sending and receiving electronic messages across a network, the electronic message processing system being arranged to distribute received electronic messages amongst a plurality of first agents, a method of processing received electronic messages, the method comprising:

rendering to one of said first agents a first electronic message;

causing a second electronic message to be generated, which second electronic message includes at least part of said first electronic message;

generating a routing tag, which routing tag includes data for determining how said second electronic message is processed by said electronic processing system;

causing said routing tag to be included in said second electronic message;

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causing said second electronic message to be sent out of said electronic processing system;

detecting, upon return of said second electronic message, or a derivative thereof, to said electronic processing system, said routing tag in said returned electronic message;

causing, upon detection of said routing tag, said returned second electronic message, or derivative thereof, to be processed based on said data included in said routing tag.

31. A method as claimed in Claim 30, further including causing the second electronic message to be sent to a second agent across said network, said second agent operating externally of said message processing system.

32. A method as claimed in Claim 30, further including causing the second electronic message to return to the electronic message processing system.

33. A method as claimed in Claim 30, further including causing, in response to the creation of said second electronic message, said first electronic message to be suspended; and causing, in response to detection of said routing tag in said returned second electronic message, said first electronic message to be unsuspended.

34. A method according to Claim 30, further including causing, in response to the creation of said second electronic message, the processing of said first electronic message to be terminated.

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35. A computer program product comprising computer program code stored on a computer usable storage medium for, when executed on a computer system, processing electronic messages in an electronic message processing system for sending and receiving electronic messages across a network, the electronic message processing system being arranged to distribute received electronic messages amongst a plurality of first agents, said computer program code being arranged to implement a method, which method comprises:

rendering to one of said first agents a first electronic message;

causing a second electronic message to be generated, which second electronic message includes at least part of said first electronic message;

generating a routing tag, which routing tag includes data for determining how said second electronic message is processed by said electronic processing system;

causing said routing tag to be included in said second electronic message;

causing said second electronic message to be sent out of said electronic processing system;

detecting, upon return of said second electronic message, or a derivative thereof, to said electronic processing system, said routing tag in said returned electronic message;

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causing, upon detection of said routing tag, said returned second electronic message, or derivative thereof, to be processed based on said data included in said routing tag.

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